



Thameside Primary School: Confidentiality Policy

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Policy reviewed by:	Sophie Greenaway
Key Changes:	This policy remains fit for purpose.



Thameside Primary School is a Rights Respecting School. School policies respect the UN Convention on the rights of the child. This policy links to:

Article 16: Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life

Article 19: Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them

Rationale

At Thameside Primary School we believe that:

- The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils are the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality. The appropriate sharing of information between school staff is an essential element in ensuring our pupils well-being and safety.
- It is an essential part of the ethos of our school that trust is established to enable pupils, staff and parents/carers to seek help both within and outside the school in order to minimise the number of situations when personal information is shared to ensure pupils and staff are supported and safe.
- Pupils, parents/carers and staff need to know the boundaries of confidentiality in order to feel safe and comfortable discussing personal issues and concerns, including sex and relationships.
- The school's attitude to confidentiality is easily understood and everyone should be able to trust the boundaries of confidentiality operating within the school.
- Issues concerning personal information including sex and relationships and other personal matters can arise at any time.
- Everyone in the school community needs to know that no-one can offer absolute confidentiality.
- Everyone in the school community needs to know the limits of confidentiality that can be offered by individuals within the school community so they can make informed decisions about the most appropriate person to talk to about any health, sex and relationship or other personal issue they want to discuss

Definition of confidentiality

Confidentiality is defined as 'something which is spoken or given in private, entrusted with another's secret affairs'.

The confider is asking for the content of the conversation to be kept secret. Anyone offering absolute confidentiality to someone else would be offering to keep the content of his or her conversation completely secret and discuss it with no-one.

In practice there are few circumstances where absolute confidentiality is offered in our school. We strive to strike a balance between ensuring the safety, well-being and protection of our pupils and staff, ensuring there is an ethos of trust where pupils and staff can ask for help when they need it and ensuring that when it is essential to share personal information, child protection issues and good practice are followed.

This means that in most cases what is offered is limited confidentiality.

Disclosure of the content of a conversation could be discussed with professional colleagues, but the confider would not be identified except in certain circumstances.



Staff should make it clear that there are limits to confidentiality at the beginning of the conversation. These limits relate to ensuring children's safety and well-being. The pupil will be informed when a confidence has to be broken for this reason and be involved in the information sharing.

Different levels of confidentiality are appropriate for different circumstances:

1. In the classroom in the course of a lesson given by a member of teaching staff or an outside visitor including health professionals.

Careful thought needs to be given to the content of the lesson setting the climate and establishing ground rules to ensure confidential disclosures are not made. It should be made clear to pupils that this is not the time or place to disclose confidential personal information. When a health professional is contributing to a school's health education programme in a classroom setting, they are working with the same boundaries of confidentiality as a teacher.

2. One-to-one disclosures to members of school staff

It is essential all members of staff know the limits of the confidentiality they can offer to both pupils and parents and carers and any required actions and sources of further support or help available both for the pupil or parent/carer, within the school and from other agencies where appropriate. All staff at this school encourage pupils to discuss different issues with their parents or carers and vice versa. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school staff will not automatically share information about the pupil with his/her parents unless it is considered to be in the child's best interests.

3. Disclosures to a counsellor, school nurse or health professional operating a confidential service in the school

Health professionals such as school nurses can give confidential medical advice to pupils provided they are competent to do so and follow the Fraser Guidelines (guidelines for doctors and other health professionals on giving medical advice to under 16's). School nurses are skilled in discussing issues and possible actions with young people and always have in mind the need to encourage pupils to discuss issues with their parents or carers. However, the needs of the pupil are paramount and the school nurse will not insist that a pupil's parents or carers are informed about any advice or treatment they give.

The legal position for school staff

All school staff should not promise confidentiality. Pupils do not have the right to expect they will not be reported to their parents or carers and may not, in the absence of an explicit promise, assume that information conveyed outside that context is private. No member of this school's staff can or should give such a promise. The safety, well-being and protection of the child is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

School staff are NOT obliged to break confidentiality except where child protection is or may be an issue, however at Thameside Primary School, we believe it is important staff are able to share their concerns about pupils' safety and well-being in a professional and appropriate manner.

Teachers, counsellors and health professionals

Professional judgement is required by a teacher, counsellor or health professional in considering whether he or she should indicate to a child that the child could make a disclosure in confidence and whether such a



confidence could then be maintained having heard the information. In exercising their professional judgement the teacher, counsellor or health professional must consider the best interests of the child, including the need to both ensure trust to provide safeguards for our children and possible child protection issues. All teachers at this school receive basic training in child protection as part of their induction to this school and are expected to follow the school's child protection policy and procedures.

Visitors, volunteers and non-teaching staff

At Thameside Primary School we expect all non-teaching staff to report any disclosures by pupils or parents/carers of a concerning nature to the designated child protection officer as soon as possible after the disclosure and in an appropriate setting, so others cannot overhear. The designated child protection officer will then take appropriate action.

The designated child protection officer in this school is the Head teacher and in her absence, the Deputy Head.

Parents/carers

Thameside Primary School believes that it is essential to work in partnership with parents and carers and we endeavour to keep parents/carers abreast of their child's progress at school, including any concerns about their progress or behaviour. However, we also need to maintain a balance so that our pupils can share any concerns and ask for help when they need it. Where a pupil does discuss a difficult personal issue with staff they will be encouraged to also discuss the matter with their parents or carers and may be supported to do so where it is appropriate.

The safety, well-being and protection of our pupils is the paramount consideration in all decisions staff at this school make about confidentiality.

Complex cases

Where there are areas of doubt about the sharing of information, we will consult with the Local Area Safeguarding Board.

When confidentiality should be broken and the procedures for doing this

See the Thameside Safeguarding Policy

Staff may have support needs themselves in dealing with some of the personal issues of our pupils. At Thameside we prefer staff to ask for help rather than possibly making a poor decision because you don't have all the facts or the necessary training, or taking worries about pupils home with you. Staff should discuss any concerns with the Head Teacher.

In addition to the above and to ensure that children, families and staff can feel secure within the school community, we respect confidentiality in the following ways:

- Parents have access to the records of their own children (e.g. behaviour, attainment, accident forms, medical), but do not have access to information about other children.



- Staff will not discuss personal information given by parents with other members of staff, except where it affects the school's ability to meet that child's needs.
- Staff will not discuss other members of staff, children or their parents in public areas (eg the staff room) or outside of school. This includes through social networking sites.
- Children are made aware of what will happen to any information they give to staff, namely that some information can remain confidential, while some has to be shared with other adults.
- Staff allow time to talk to children and families at an appropriate time and in an appropriate place.
- Staff and governor induction includes an awareness of the importance of confidentiality.
- Staff are supported by the Designated Child Protection Officer(Head teacher) when dealing with difficult situations.
- Volunteers helping in school will be given a copy of the policy so that they are aware of the importance of confidentiality.
- Regular training is given with regards to dealing with a disclosure from a child.
- Parents are informed through Thameside Primary School Safeguarding Policy of the duties of the Designation Child Protection Officer should a disclosure occur
- All members of the school community are made aware that the Head teacher is the Designated Teacher for Child Protection.
- Any concerns relating to a child's safety are kept on CPOMS and in a secure, confidential file and are shared with as few people as possible on a 'need to know' basis.
- Personal information about children, families and staff is kept securely, whilst remaining as accessible as is necessary.
- Transfer of school records to other schools will be done according to school procedures
- Issues relating to the employment of staff and volunteers remain confidential to the people directly involved with making personnel decisions
- Discussions about data with all staff, including governors, are undertaken with regard to the Reading protocol
- Parents' permission with regards to taking photographs of their children is sought on entry to the school and staff are kept informed.

Please cross-reference with the following:

Policy for Child Protection and Safeguarding
Policy and Guidelines for PSCHE
Policy and Guidelines for Relationship and Sex Education
Policy and Guidelines for Drug Education
Thameside Relationships & Behaviour Policy
Thameside Anti-Bullying & Anti-Racism Policy
Thameside ICT Agreements
Reading LA data sharing protocol



Please also reference: Human Rights Act 1998
Data Protection Act 1998
Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) 2013

Dissemination of confidentiality policy

Staff, governors, parents and children are consulted through staff meetings, GB meets, school council and parent council meetings.

Confidentiality is included in the staff induction procedures and is referenced in the staff handbook.

The policy will be available to parents via the school website.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The governor with responsibility (Inclusion link governor) will review any issues that arise over confidentiality with the head teacher so that the effectiveness of the policy in practice can be assessed.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

S Greenaway, July 2023